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*UCD College of Science  
Graduate School  
Annual Report 2017/18*

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**Contents**

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Introduction.....	3
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Graduate School .....	3
Graduate School Office.....	3
Graduate School Committees.....	3
Graduate School Board.....	3
Graduate Taught Programme Board .....	4
Graduate Training and Communication .....	5
Graduate Governance, Policy Development and Guidelines .....	6
Statistical Overview .....	6
Graduate School Board decisions, 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2017 – 31 <sup>st</sup> August 2018 .....	7
Graduate Taught Student numbers.....	7
Graduate research student numbers .....	7

## Introduction

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Since its establishment 13 years ago, the College of Science Graduate School has been an integral part of UCD's efforts to design and implement an effective graduate education in Ireland. In the past year, the focus has been on connecting with the students, in particular research students, in an effort to build a research student community within the College as well as enhancing their experience by listening to their feedback and updating communication and processes in line with this.

This report provides an overview, both in terms of statistics and of the activities of the Graduate School over the last year in particular.

*Assoc. Prof. Emma Sokell, August 2018*

## Graduate School

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### Graduate School Office

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The Graduate School is physically located in E1.13 in the O'Brien Centre for Science. The Graduate School is managed by the Graduate School Manager, Deirbhle Carroll, who has been part of the Science Graduate School from the very start.

The main roles of this office are to:

- Provide support services of the Graduate School Board and Graduate Taught Programme Board
- Oversee the graduate taught (7 Schools) and research (12 Schools) activities
- Process graduate research and taught recommendations such as changes in registration, leaves of absence requests, appointment of special externs and thesis extensions
- Support the graduate student community in its efforts to strengthen informal and social links among peers
- Support the implementation of the structured PhD programme
- Manage and coordinate the graduate exams (taught and research) board for the College of Science
- Develop and monitor plans to process improvement of graduate education in both the College of Science and UCD
- Contribute to policy formation and manage its implementation through communication with the College's constituent Schools

### Graduate School Committees

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#### Graduate School Board

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For the past 7 years, the College of Science Graduate Board had responsibility for research students in both the College of Science and College of Health and Agricultural Sciences. Research students in the latter College are now under the remit of the CHAS Graduate Research Programme Board.

The Board's responsibility is to oversee research graduate programmes, to review School recommendations for graduate admission and special external examiners and, where appropriate, to refer matters to the Academic Council Committee on Examinations (ACCE) or University Programmes Board (UPB). The Board also monitors research students' progress including the transfer from Stage 1 to Stage 2 of the PhD programme. The Board assists in policy-making both at local level and at University level, ensuring that policies are implemented and that the College's constituent Schools are consulted on, and contribute to, regulatory and policy change. The meetings of the Graduate School Board are normally held twice a semester during the academic year and there are monthly submissions for approval to coincide with ACCE and UPB deadlines. Minutes and documentation for meetings are available on the Science Graduate School Google Drive.

The Board, which is chaired by the Director of the Graduate School, consists of academic representatives from each School, the Student Union's Graduate Education Officer and a colleague from UCD Registry also attends and offers liaison and advice on regulatory and policy matters to the Board. The Graduate School Manager provides critical administrative support.

Between 1<sup>st</sup> September 2017 and August 2018 the Board consisted of the following members:

Assoc. Prof. Emma Sokell - Chair, Graduate School Director

Ms Deirbhle Carroll - Graduate School Manager

Assoc. Prof. Tom Wilkinson - School of Biology & Environmental Science

Assoc. Prof. Peadar Ó Gaora- School of Biomolecular & Biomedical Science

Dr Xiangming Zhu- School of Chemistry

Dr Georgiana Ifrim - School of Computer Science

Prof Frank McDermott - School of Earth Sciences

Dr Helena Smigoc - School of Mathematics and Statistics

Professor Ronan McNulty - School of Physics

College of Health and Agricultural Science Board members – transferred to CHAS GSB 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2018

Assoc. Prof. Helen Gallagher- School of Medicine & Medical Science

Dr Kate Frazer - School of Nursing, Midwifery & Health Systems

Assoc. Prof. Brona Fullen - School of Public Health, Physiotherapy & Performance Science

Assoc. Prof. Conor O Reilly – School of Agriculture and Food Science & School of Veterinary Medicine

Prof. Matthias Wilm - Conway Institute

## Graduate Taught Programme Board

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The Board's responsibility is to oversee taught graduate programmes within the College of Science and review School recommendations for changes to registration, withdrawals and Recognition of Prior Learning. This board also reviews new programme proposals and changes to existing programmes. The meetings of the Graduate School Board are normally held twice a semester during the academic year and there are monthly submissions for approval to coincide with Science programme Board meetings and UPB deadlines. Minutes and documentation for meetings are available on the Science Graduate School Google Drive. The membership of the Graduate School Taught Boards consists of the Graduate School Director, Graduate School Manager, Associate Dean of Science, Science Programme Office Director, Marketing Manager, Science Internship Manager and one academic member from each relevant school.

Between 1<sup>st</sup> September 2017 and August 2018 the Board consisted of the following members:

Assoc. Prof. Emma Sokell - Chair, Graduate School Director

Ms Deirbhle Carroll - Graduate School Manager

Assoc. Prof. Gavin Stewart - School of Biology & Environmental Science

Assoc. Prof. Cormac Murphy - School of Biomolecular & Biomedical Science

Assoc. Prof. James Sullivan - School of Chemistry

Prof. Julie Berndsen - School of Computer Science

Prof Peter Haughton - School of Earth Sciences

Dr Kevin Hutchinson - School of Mathematics and Statistics

Assoc Professor Dominic Zerulla - School of Physics

Assoc Professor Evelyn Doyle - Associate Dean of Science

Ms Annette Forde - Science Programme Office Director

Ms Carla Naltchayan - Internship Manager

Dr Orla Donoghue - Science Outreach Manager

## Graduate Training and Communication

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### *Research Orientation Event – Thursday 12th October 3pm*

The Graduate School organises a research orientation event each October for incoming PhD and Research Masters students in the College of Science and the College of Health and Agricultural Sciences. This event gives students an overview of the regulations and structure of their programmes and gives insight on what to expect with talks from a current PhD student and a PhD supervisor. This event is always well attended and feedback on this is always positive.

### *Academic Writing for Science for Postgraduate students (SCI50030)*

From September 2017, the Graduate School ran a module designed specifically for postgraduate students; this ran in both semester one and two and was at capacity for each sitting. The feedback received from students has been very positive. The Academic Writing for Science Postgraduates module uses practice-based learning methods in order to introduce analytical frameworks that will show how writing and reading are interrelated and core to critical thinking. It focuses on the elements of article and thesis construction needed to produce an effective academic work based on sound scientific research practices. It also includes the evaluation of the incorporation of secondary material, citation styles, and academic integrity.

The Graduate School also runs two additional modules for Graduate Research students:

SCI50010 Online Research Skills. This covers the following specified learning activities: - working with your supervisor/collaborators, - project management, - intellectual property in the research context, - research ethics, - career planning, - getting published, attending conferences, presenting and networking.

SCI50020 Research Integrity Online. This module is designed to help researchers in the sciences to: Know, understand and explain the key responsibilities they have as researchers. Identify the challenges they could face in meeting those responsibilities. Be aware of strategies for dealing with pressures and difficult situations.

### *Research Focus Group and PhD Rep meetings*

The College of Science Graduate School ran a focus group specifically for research students to help improve processes and student experience based on the feedback given. This was a very useful exercise, so it was agreed that the Graduate School would meet with the PhD reps from each School on a semester basis.

Coming from these meetings, it was noted that the knowledge regarding certain aspects of the programmes such as Doctoral Studies Panel and Stage Transfer Assessment for a number of students was incomplete. To rectify this issue, the Graduate School developed a student handbook which gives detailed information regarding the requirements of a research programme. This will be circulated at the Orientation event and also available to current students.

It was also noted that students were unaware of the supports available to them, both academic, administrative and pastoral care, so the Graduate School created a poster which outlined the supports available at School, College and University level.

### *College of Science Graduate Research Networking Lunch 17th May 12.30pm*

The College of Science Graduate School ran the inaugural PhD networking lunch on 17<sup>th</sup> May. The aim of this was to give research students the opportunity to meet other students and develop their network. Aoibheann Bird from the Insight Centre gave a talk on promoting your research on social media. This event was well attended and feedback from students was positive.

### *College of Science Graduate School website*

The Graduate School has enhanced the Graduate School website to provide a one-stop shop for staff and students in relation to graduate students/programmes.

### Policy Development and Guidelines

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An important role of the Graduate School is to improve, develop and monitor policies with regards to graduate studies, over the last number of years; the Graduate School has developed a number of Best Practice Guidelines covering a range of topics and in 2017/18, a number of these guidelines were updated:

#### 2017/18

- Student Handbook
- Student Supports document
- College of Science Graduate School website
- External credits for PhD students

#### 2016/17

- Updated Thesis by a Collection of Papers guidelines

#### 2015/16

- Holidays and Working hours for PhD students
- Updated Special Extern Examiners guidelines

#### 2014/15

- RPL application for research students
- Mandatory credits for Research students

#### 2013/14

- Best Practice for PhD vivas by video link
- Updating of RPDP document

#### 2012/13

- Structured PhD Best Practice Guidelines in relation DSP & STA
- Process for approval of thesis examination committees, including template for CV of extern examiner
- Collection of papers for thesis

#### Student Documents:

The Graduate School has compiled a number of other information documents for PhD/MSc students to help them through their research programme, see below:

- Motivation for PhD students
- Checklist for PhD students
- Checklist for PhD Supervisors
- Checklist for MSc Supervisors
- Checklist for MSc Students

## Graduate School Board decisions, 1<sup>st</sup> September 2017 – 31<sup>st</sup> August 2018

**IMPORTANT: Decisions on students recommendations for this Board encompassed the College of Health And Agricultural Sciences (Research) up until December 2017.**

### Graduate Taught Recommendation Reviewed 2017/18 (1<sup>st</sup> Sept 17 – 31<sup>st</sup> August 2018)

Leave of Absence	55
Withdrawals	88
RPL	67
Changes in Registration	96
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>306</b>

### Graduate Research Recommendation Reviewed (1<sup>st</sup> Sept 17 – 31<sup>st</sup> August 2018)

New Admissions	194
Extern Examiners	170
Thesis Extensions	56
Permission to continue	60
Leave of Absence	20
Withdrawals	12
Transfer to Stage 2	121
Changes in Registration	108
Updating of DSPs	37
Re-admission	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>786</b>

## Graduate Taught Student numbers

**Graduate Taught Numbers 2017/18 and 18/19 to date** - \*Source: Infoview S144 report as of  
2017/18 numbers include September 2017 start and January 2018 start fully registered students (201700 / 201701)  
2018/19 numbers include September 2018 (201800) all registration status and January 2018 (201701)

School	2017/18 ALL YEARS	2018/19 ALL YEARS	2017/18- Year 1 Sept. start	2018/19 - Year 1 Sept. start
Biology & Environmental Science	152	191	65	104
Biomolecular & Biomedical Science	105	124	102	126
Chemistry	7	14	7	14
Computer Science	547	677	378	443
Earth Sciences	6	2	5	2
Mathematics and Statistic	286	318	188	210
Physics	41	23	39	28
<b>TOTAL TAUGHT FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL</b>	<b>1144</b>	<b>1349</b>	<b>784</b>	<b>927</b>

## Graduate research student numbers

**Graduate Research Numbers (All Programmes) 2017/18 and 18/19 to date** \*Source: Infoview S145 report as of  
2017/18 numbers include Sept 2017 start, Jan 2018 and May 2018 start fully registered students (201700 / 201701 / 201704)  
2018/19 numbers include September 2018 (201800) all registration status and January 2018 (201701) May 2018 (201704) fully registered students)

College of Science	Total 2017/18 (all start dates)	1 <sup>st</sup> Year Sept 2017	Total 2018/19 (all start dates)	1 <sup>st</sup> Year Sept 2018
Biology & Environmental Science	55	9	47	5
Biomolecular & Biomedical Science	79	9	66	14
Chemistry	136	51	105	18
Computer Science	118	23	121	24
Earth Sciences	25	1	23	3
Mathematics and Statistic	38	7	32	8
Physics	59	12	57	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>86</b>

